

The Power of Asking the Right Questions

Columbia Law School Mediation Clinic

In partnership with UNITAR

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Welcome & Introductions

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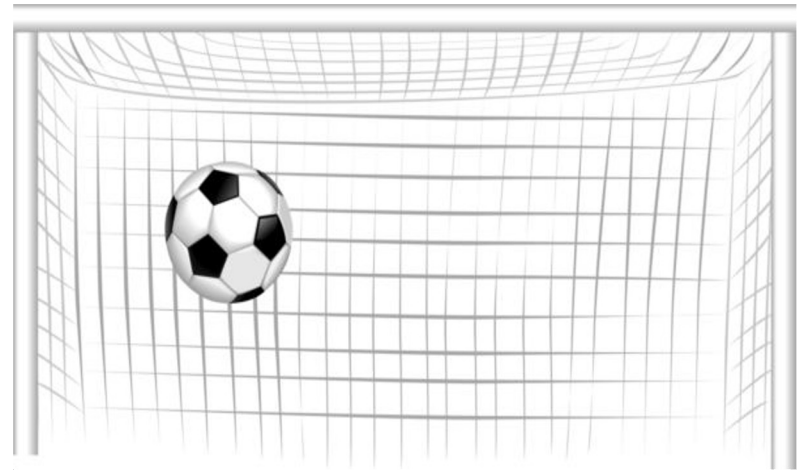
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Goals for the Day

- **Learning to Use Questions to Steer Conversations**
 - **Exploring the Benefits of Different Types of Questions**
 - **Determining When and How to Use Different Types of Questions**
 - **Responding Effectively to Answers**

Strategic Use of Questions

- Clarifying
- Focusing
- Stimulating
- Suggesting
- Building relationships
- Encouraging participation
- Exploring and evaluating alternatives
- Moving toward closure



Cultural Considerations in Asking Questions

In countries where you live and/or work, how does culture influence questions?

Asking the Right Questions

Types of Questions

Framing Your Questions

Uses of Open Questions

Usage	Example
To find out as much as the speaker is willing to share about a topic	<p><i>How did you approach this task?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● <i>Describe how you approach this task.</i> <p><i>How do you remain focused on your work?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● <i>Tell me (more) about how you stay focused.</i>
To find out more about a person: their wants, needs, thoughts, and beliefs	<p><i>What motivated you to make that decision?</i></p> <p><i>Why is that so important to you?</i></p>

Uses of Closed Questions

Usage	Example
To testing understanding (asking yes/no questions)	<i>So, you want to move into our apartment—right?</i>
To set up a desired positive or negative frame of mind in them	<i>Are you happy with the current state of the Global Compact on Migration?</i> <i>Would you like to focus on the Gender-Related SDGs?</i>
To moving to action (seeking assent)	<i>If I can deliver this tomorrow, will you sign for it now?</i>

Exercise: Experience How Open/Closed Questions Impact the Speaker

Framing Your Questions

OPEN QUESTIONS WITH ASSERTIONS

Why are you so fixated on this point?

Did you remember to discuss this with her?

What's the big deal? This seems like an ancillary issue.

OPEN QUESTIONS USING NEUTRAL LANGUAGE

Help me understand what is important to you.

Tell me about your conversation with her.

What are your concerns?

Framing Your Questions

OPEN QUESTIONS WITH ASSERTIONS

Don't you think the proposed plan will only make things worse?

Why didn't you approach it this way instead?

Aren't you concerned he won't respond well to that suggestion?

OPEN QUESTIONS USING NEUTRAL LANGUAGE

What are your thoughts on the proposed plan?

How do you think can we improve our approach next time?

How do you think he will respond to that suggestion?

Coffee Break



Information- Gathering Tools

Active Listening

- Be genuinely **curious**
- Listen to **understand** participants':
 - Concerns
 - Needs
 - Wants
- **NOT** to prepare your response

Non-Verbal

- Stop talking
- Eye contact
- Posture/facial expression

Verbal

- Acknowledge what is being said
- Acknowledge feelings
- Clarify
- Summarize interest, issues, and feelings

What you are listening for: Facts, Feelings, Interests

Facts: The “what”

Feelings: The emotions underlying the facts

- The feelings experienced by parties and those affected
- The feelings the negotiation invokes

Interests: An interest is the need represented by an issue or position.

- Economic, Social, Psychological, Legal, Political, Moral/Ethical)

Skills Exercise: Four-Way Listening

In groups of four:

- One person shares a personal conflict or decision she or he is facing
- One person listens for facts, another for interests, and the third for feelings
- Listeners should take notes on what is said, and after speaker finishes telling whole story:
 - Person A listens for the facts, ending with the sentence, “did I get it right?”
 - Person B listens for the interests, ending with the sentence, “did I get it right?”
 - Person C, listens for the feelings, ending with the sentence, “did I get it right?”

The Mirror: Questions to Ask Yourself

The Ask for More framework

Using questions to guide your negotiation

The Mirror



- **What does asking *myself* questions have to do with diplomatic conversations?** A lot. Research finds a definite link between self-awareness and negotiation proficiency. Asking the right questions helps us cultivate self-awareness and knowledge.
- Negotiation starts before you sit down with the other side—you need to steer your own internal conversation first.
- Ask yourself open questions to clarify your own goals, interests, emotions and solutions.
- Your source of power in negotiation is not bluster but knowledge.

Mirror Questions

Questions you ask yourself to find clarity on who you are and what you want to achieve

Examples:

What's the problem I want to solve?

What do I need?

What's the first step?

Reflection/Questions

- What questions do you have?
- What is one skill you're excited to use moving forward?
- What are some concerns you have?

Thank You!

We hope that you will leave this workshop with an understanding of the importance of *Asking the Right Questions*.

A Reminder of the Power of Questions

- *It has NEVER been more important to lead your important conversations with questions.*
- *The right questions can help us achieve the personal clarity we need to navigate uncertain times.*
- *Asking the right questions can also give us a greater understanding of others in times of crisis.*